THE
RECONSTRUCTIONIST

DEDICATED TO THE ADVANCEMENT OF JUDAISM AS A RELIGIOUS CIVILIZATION, TO THE UPBUILDING OF ISRAEL'S ANCIENT HOMELAND, AND TO THE FURTHERANCE OF UNIVERSAL FREEDOM, JUSTICE AND PEACE.

Vol. IV. December 2, 1938 Kislev 9, 5699 No. 15

Editorials

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PAGING THE GENERAL COUNCIL FOR JEWISH RIGHTS
THE UNITED FRONT OF RELIGION IN AMERICA

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The RECONSTRUCTIONIST is published bi-weekly for twenty consecutive issues starting in October, by The Society for the Advancement of Judaism, 15 West 86th St., New York, N. Y. Subscription $1.00 a year; foreign $1.25; individual copy 10 cents. Entered as second class matter January 9, 1935, at the Post Office, New York, N. Y., under the act of March 3, 1879.

The editorials represent the opinions of the editors only.

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EDITORIALS

The Proposed Round Table Conference On Palestine

THE RECONSTRUCTIONIST welcomes the invitation to a Round Table Conference recently issued by the British Government to Jews and Arabs. For years most Zionists have been asking for just such a measure and in September, 1937, the Jewish Agency definitely requested that the Mandatory Power initiate such a conference. Great Britain's failure to respond favorably to this demand was so conspicuous as to lend credence to the suspicion that it did not genuinely desire a rapprochement between the two peoples most concerned with the destiny of Palestine. Late in the day as it now is, there is still room for the hope that out of joint deliberations peace and a *modus vivendi* may emerge for both groups.

Nor does THE RECONSTRUCTIONIST resent the fact that representatives of other Arab states have been invited to participate in the conference. To be sure, a case against such an invitation can be made on strictly legal grounds. But it seems likely that the presence of spokesmen of neighboring countries will be an advantage for the Jewish cause. The heads of most Arab states are not overly devoted to the Arab extremists of Palestine—witness the Mufti's resentment against the invitation to them. Any peace which might be attained would be the stronger for their agreement.

It is not unlikely, last of all, that, once normality has been restored to Palestine, the other states, Transjordan, Irak, etc., may be the better disposed to encourage Jewish settlement in their territories under terms of mutual guarantees.

Nor is THE RECONSTRUCTIONIST sympathetic to the scepticism expressed in certain quarters over the prospects of the conference. Zionist leaders in official statements have stressed repeatedly that the Jews have no desire to dominate the Arabs. Binationalism might well be a way out. Instead of a Jewish extremism which insists on a Palestine as Jewish as England is English, and an Arab extremism which seeks to make Palestine *Judenrein,* both groups might well compromise on parity—Jewish immigration, and purchase of land being permitted until the populations of the two groups and their land holdings are approximately equal. Such an arrangement would relieve the fears of those Arabs who are in earnest in their protests against a minority status. It would, on the other, side allow for a large Jewish immigration and land purchase immediately. It might ultimately open other Arab areas to Jewish industrial products and perhaps settlement.

Every effort must be made to turn the conference into a success along lines such

as these—for the sake of Jews in Palestine, for the sake of their persecuted brethren abroad, for the sake of the Jewish cultural renaissance that depends on Eretz Israel. An arrangement such as is outlined here would not be the whole loaf which was once expected—but neither would it be a mere crumb. And is there not an ancient saying to the effect that part of a loaf eaten in peace is better than much amidst strife.

Paging the General Council for Jewish Rights!

IT has been the frequent taunt of European Fascist leaders in their disparagement of Democracy that "while Democracy talks, Fascism acts." The truth of this allegation was painfully brought to our attention during the last few weeks when the new wave of merciless terror and extermination was let loose by the Nazis upon the helpless and defenseless Jews of Germany. The people of the world were aghast at the new outburst of inhuman outrages and felt as one with President Roosevelt that one "could scarcely believe that such things could occur in a twentieth century civilization."

But moral indignation is not enough! Nazis have no conscience. The only language they understand is economic and political pressure. Calling home our trade expert and ambassador, even though only for "report and consultation" was more frightening to the Nazis and their allies than any words of protest, no matter how blistering and denunciatory.

That there has been a spontaneous reaction of revulsion to the latest Nazi atrocities on the part of all sections and strata of the American people is one of the most heartening episodes in an otherwise black and disspiriting international situation. The average American sympathizes with the helpless Jews and oppressed Catholics of Germany. A wise and alert popular leadership could mobilize this widespread sympathy and indignation and canalize it into effective action on the political and economic front. But, alas, where are our national Jewish leaders?

Last June in Pittsburgh there was formed the General Council for Jewish Rights embracing representatives of the American Jewish Committee, the American Jewish Congress, the B'nai B'rith and the Jewish Labor Committee. Hope was then expressed by individual Jews and organizations that this new General Council spelled the end of chaos and *shtadlanut* in American Jewish life, and that henceforth American Jewry could look forward confidently to a responsible and effective centralized leadership.

But what leadership has the General Council for Jewish Rights manifested in the latest crisis? Have the constituent organizations and individual members been called upon to express their protest in some concrete fashion? Has any attempt been made to mobilize the masses in organized protest and to translate their indignation into effective action? The most that the Council has done, so far as the public record is concerned, is to issue a statement declaring that "It is our hope that . . . the people of this and other countries, having expressed their sense of outrage, will join in a determined effort, not alone to save the victims of oppression in lands across the sea but to preserve the institutions of democracy and the security of our civilization."

This is a fine sentiment and should have been uttered. But does the above hope possess greater validity and cogency because one united group, the joint General Council, uttered it, instead of its being uttered separately by the four organizations that compose the General Council? The General Council was formed "for the defense of equal rights of Jews in this country and abroad." Are we to assume that the Council's chief weapon of defense in the present tragic emergency is the issuance of a public statement deploring the tragedy and appealing for the preservation of democracy? Is this how the equal rights of Jews are to be defended?

Perhaps the General Council has succumbed to the element within it that favors *shtadlanut,* i.e., back-stage wire-pulling by 'influential' people as against a direct appeal to the masses to act. If so, then the General Council is guilty of subverting the very ideal and method of democracy which, in its public statement, it appeals to the public to uphold and preserve. Centralized *shtadlanut* is no whit more democratic than sectional or factional *shtadlanut.*

Clearly, there is something wrong with the General Council. Perhaps it was doomed to impotence from its very inception since its constitution specifies that decisions which "involve an encroachment upon the racial, national, religious or economic philosophies of the constituent organizations" are precluded.

Meanwhile the leftist Jewish People's Committee, which had been excluded from membership by the General Council, has taken the lead in rallying the masses to public demonstrations against Nazi brutalities, in picketing Nazi steamers, in spreading the Nazi boycott and in urging that the government impose a trade embargo on Nazi Germany. If the General Council is hamstrung in pursuing a similar policy because of possible encroachments upon the economic philosophies of its constituent organizations, then we think a realignment ought to be undertaken by those elements in the General Council who would rather unite with the Jewish People's Committee in fighting anti-Semitism and fascism on the economic and political front.

The national address of the General Council for Jewish Rights is 485 Fifth Avenue, New York City. Readers and their organizations who feel that the General Council should be galvanized into effective action and leadership even if it means a revision of its constitution (or a split and a realignment with the Jewish People's Committee), should address themselves to their leaders forthwith and with vigor. If, because of class division and antagonism there cannot be unity in Jewish life, let there be at least unity among those sections that really can unite for a common program of effective action; for in this, the greatest crisis in Jewish history, we need a program of *action.* To date the General Council for Jewish Rights has not provided it!

The United Front of Religion in America

THE Nazi riots of last week, with their unparalleled brutality and sadism, have at last aroused the world to the menace which the Third Reich holds out to all civilization. But none have spoken more bravely than the spokesmen of organized religion. Catholics and Protestants alike have shared in the expressions of protest and indignation. On November 20th, at the regular Sunday morning services, Christian churches of all denominations joined in prayer on behalf of the victims of Nazi persecutions. The text of the prayer composed jointly by Dr. Joseph R. Sizoo, vice-president of the Federation of the Churches of Christ in America and Rabbi David De Sola Pool, president of the Synagogue Council of America, was promulgated under the signature of twelve Catholic bishops and by the leaders of seventeen major denominatinos of Protestantism.

This outpouring of feeling is significant not merely as an expression of sincere pity for the suffering of the Jews in Germany—pity is a sentiment appropriate even to our relations to dumb animals—but as an expression of something much finer. It expresses a sense of fellowship with Jewry in a common cause: the defense of spiritual values that are cherished by all who stand for ethical religion and the decencies of civilization. The effect of pity can, at best, be the relief of pain, but such fellowship as has been demonstrated by the churches in this instance inspires the courage and faith that enables us to endure pain and to praise God that we are among the persecuted rather than among the persecutors. Pity, by itself alone, offers no prospect of col-

laboration in removing the cause of suffering, but when the churches actively array themselves on the side of the oppressed against the oppressor they create a power for good that, in the long run, will prove invincible.

Nazism, with its apotheosis of hate and violence, is a challenge to the kingdom of God as conceived both in Christianity and Judaism and the churches have bravely accepted the challenge. No outlaw can long succeed in defying the community, and no outlaw nation can attain ultimate success against the world community. The united front of religion will in the end prevail against the idolatrous tribal worship of the Aryan war-god.

And long after that victory shall have been won, and the conflict itself shall have been all but forgotten, there will remain the beneficent effect of the brotherhood of faith that was responsible for the victory. The religious forces in America shall have succeeded in clearing religion from the charge of *odium theologicum* that has in our day alienated many souls from church and synagogue alike. These forces shall have demonstrated that a sincere faith in the fatherhood of God inspires men to realize the brotherhood of man.

The Jewish Community Comes of Age

By Simon Shetzer

(Continued from our last issue)

In our last issue, Mr. Shetzer discussed the forces making for Jewish community organization as exemplified in the experience of Detroit Jewry and the processes of integration that terminated in a demand for a comprehensive plan of organization in which every Jewish interest should be adequately represented. In this issue, he concludes with an account of the procedure in organizing the Jewish Community Council, its constitutional structure and some of its achievements.—Eds.

IV

AFTER several months of deliberations, the Provisional Committee drafted a constitution, submitted it to the community through the local Anglo-Jewish and Yiddish press and, by direct submission, to some 200 organizations. The Constitution was considered by two conferences of Jewish organizations in April and in June of 1937, to which each organization had sent one accredited delegate. At these conferences some minor changes in the original draft were incorporated and the Constitution was then resubmitted to these organizations for specific ratification. At the second conference in June, the provisional committee was authorized to call the Council into being upon ratification by one-third of those organizations who had been invited to send delegates to the conferences. When the requisite number of ratifications had been recorded, and each organization had selected the number of representatives to which, under the Constitution, it was entitled, the delegates were assembled in September 1937, officers and directors were elected and the Jewish Community Council of Detroit was established and ready to function.

The attitude of the community in general and the degree to which it was prepared to accept the Community Council is evidenced by the fact that our charter membership consisted of 155 organizations, who were entitled to designate 246 delegates and whose constituent membership represented approximately three-fourths of the total adult Jewish population of Detroit. These 155 organizations fall roughly into the following categories:

50 philanthropic and benevolent groups
30 synagogues and their auxiliaries
22 social service agencies
18 Zionist organizations
12 social groups
11 lodges and their auxiliaries
8 educational organizations
4 councils of organizations, having 222 affiliates.

These figures are chiefly interesting as revealing the catholic interests comprehended within the Council's membership and its thoroughly representative character. Today the Council's membership has reached 175 organizations. It is estimated that the number of eligible groups still unaffiliated does not exceed 25 or 30 at the most.

There are, at this time, some twenty-one recognized community councils in the United States, classified in two groups —thirteen with welfare fund functions, of which Cincinnati's is the oldest prototype, and eight, like Cleveland's and Detroit's, which have no such functions, principally because the welfare fund functions had already been preempted by established welfare federations.

While the Detroit and Cleveland Councils have much in common, the Detroit Community Council is unique in one respect. Ours is the only one which sets forth in its constitution a broad, wellnigh exhaustive catalogue of purposes, comprehending every conceivable concern and interest of the Jewish group. In principle, at least, it is broad enough to encompass all of the activities of Federation, too.

The more adequately to appreciate the significance of this statement of purposes, let me place before you the Preamble of our Constitution:

"In order to achieve a coordination of the various forces in Jewish life; to help preserve and maintain the dignity and integrity of the Jewish people; to defend and protect its civil, political, and religious rights, wherever such rights are in jeopardy; in general, to advance and promote the cultural, social, economic, and philanthropic interests and the national and spiritual aspirations of the Jewish people; and, whenever deemed advisable, to cooperate with existing non-local agencies having similar or related purposes, we, the representatives of the undersigned Jewish organizations, do hereby adopt this CONSTITUTION OF THE JEWISH COMMUNITY COUNCIL OF DETROIT, and do dedicate ourselves faithfully to pursue the aims and purposes set forth both in this PREAMBLE and in the provisions which follow."

In addition to these objectives which are recited in the preamble and set forth in greater particularity in the statement of purposes, these three additional aims are projected:

B. To develop an articulate, intelligent, and effective public opinion on Jewish problems and interests.

E. To cooperate with other agencies for mutual understanding with the non-Jewish population.

G. To encourage the amicable adjustment of differences between individuals and/or organizations, by providing the appropriate machinery for conciliation and arbitration.

Wholly germane to a discussion of the program of purposes is the provision of eligibility for membership which reads as follows:

ARTICLE III, Section 1.

A. Any Jewish organization, or any organization composed entirely of Jewish members, with a dues-paying or voting membership of not less than 25 adults, having a constructive interest in the preservation of some aspect of Jewish life, shall be eligible for membership, provided it has been in existence for at least one year prior to application for admission to the Council.

B. Organizations which are primarily political in nature, and their affiliates, shall not be eligible for membership in the Council.

The statement of purposes, establishing as it does a platform upon which every thinking Jew, conscious of his historic identity and prepared to assume his share of responsibility in the organized life of his people, can find common ground with his fellow-Jews, would seem to be wholly acceptable as the point of departure for any community council. Yet, it has been subjected to considerable criticism. The less vital objection is raised by those who, preferring an empirical growth to one planned in advance, urge that it were better to accumulate a set of purposes as functions are assumed and specific undertakings are programmed. The danger in this approach lies in leaving the door open to subsequent jurisdictional disputes and to conflicts in which the question will be posed as to the right of the Council to act in a given situation. Either the Council assumes, at the very beginning, its competence with respect to every aspect of Jewish life on which there is a

basis for common agreement and joint action, or, limiting its competence *ab initio,* it represents a contradiction of the very concept underlying this form of community organization.

A second objection, voiced by the Executive Secretary of the American Jewish Committee at the National Assembly of the Council of Federations and Welfare Funds at Cincinnati in January, 1938, is "that it (the Detroit Council) adopts so definite and partisan an ideology in Jewish life," a criticism shared evidently by others.* This criticism is, I submit, wholly invalid. The Constitution does not impel any of its constituent organizations to the acceptance of any particular philosophy or interpretation of Jewish life, religious, racial, or nationalist. It does, however, state all the interests of Jews, to any one or several of which, most Jews can and do subscribe, and with respect to any one of which substantial agreement may under given circumstances be achieved without violence to the convictions of the minority. The Constitution, I take it, is particularly careful to avoid committing any of its adherents to either a Zionist philosophy or a declaration of religious affiliation. It expects a very minimum, merely "a constructive interest in the preservation of some aspect of Jewish life." Surely, any group of Jews recognizing no such constructive interest, does not have a legitimate place in a deliberative body dedicated to the promotion of these interests.

The only philosophy to which all of its adherents would seem to be committed is that of a "survival" program. A council which seeks to establish an integrated Jewish community, to provide an opportunity for joint enterprise within the ascertainable limits of a common interest and concern is by every implication predicated upon the proposition that there exists an historically identifiable Jewish group which shares in common a history, a culture, a tradition and a destiny; that such a group has many problems, conflicts, and interests which affect all its members in varying degrees and that Jewish life has values common to all of its component parts worth preserving and enhancing. Unless there be this expressed or implied desire on the part of the Jew to perpetuate himself *qua* Jew, to continue the Jewish tradition which has so handsomely enriched whatever remains of morality and ethical conduct in world civilization today, and to assure the survival of these Jewish values by encouraging an appreciative and creative vitality in the Jewish group, unless all these are within our contemplation, why bother with philanthropy, the protection of rights, the promotion of mutual and reciprocal good will, the honor and dignity of Jewish life, and the organization of machinery to promote these purposes? The Community Council is itself a "survival program" and at the same time a conduit through which to channel various survival programs. It is either this or nothing.

V

In pursuance of its stated purposes, the Detroit Council has already, in the brief year of its existence, embarked upon a program of activity. We have not attempted to implement the whole declaration of purposes at one time. We have been guided by caution and by an anxious desire to demonstrate to the skeptical and the critical the correctness of our original premise, namely, that it is possible for Jews to achieve substantial agreement and to collaborate effectively in a cooperative undertaking. To have promulgated a complete program, before acquiring a tradition of success in a limited sphere, would have been to risk complete collapse due to excessive weight. We directed our first efforts into those fields which were not being serviced at all or only inadequately.

The first two committees were set up to deal with discrimination in employment and occupancy and, closely related

* *1938 General Assembly Proceedings,* p. 52.

to the first, a committee on public relations, having a two-fold objective: the first, of a negative character, to reply to and discourage the defamation, disparagement and traducement of the name and honor of the Jewish people and the second, of a positive nature, to promote good will, tolerance and understanding by interpreting the Jew and his legitimate aspirations to the non-Jewish community and by correcting current misinterpretations.

At the outset of our discrimination work, the question arose whether we should first make a complete survey of discrimination in employment and occupancy, or proceed at once to the acceptance and investigation of specific complaints. The survey was dismissed as involving a cost beyond our budget, although it was described as the proper approach from the long-range point of view. A number of complaints were referred to our office, far less than we had anticipated. Tracing false rumors of discrimination and discouraging their dissemination are equally as important as pursuing valid complaints. It has taken us some time to develop a technique by which to approach employers to secure their cooperation and understanding of the problem. We have had two particular experiences which are especially heartening. One case involved a large automobile manufacturing plant, where an employee had been dismissed by a foreman for the sole reason that he was Jewish. We brought the matter to the attention of the director of personnel and employment and upon our representations, the man was immediately returned to his job.

Another situation involved one of the largest public utilities in the state, where Jews were said to be unable to obtain employment. As a result of our committee's interview and negotiations with the assistant to the president of the corporation, arrangements have been made for this utility to use the services of our Jewish Community Center Employment Office. The value of this assurance will not be definitely known until economic conditions improve to the point where new employees are hired. Other cases of discrimination have been handled with varying degrees of success. The work is too recent to warrant any definite conclusions. Our limited experience has value chiefly in that we have centralized such complaints and rumors, whereas previously each bearer of the rumor or complaint had constituted himself sole spokesman, addressing the offender in the name of the whole community.

In the realm of public relations, we have a more extensive record. In one of our local papers there appeared recently an editorial referring to "certain Jewish and other refugees wishing to migrate to this country" and branding, by obvious implication, all newcomers to the United States as "potential paupers and criminals." A committee visited the editor who forthwith apologized, admitting that the editorial had been unfortunately worded. In the following weeks, no less than three favorable editorials appeared, in addition to a comment denouncing Father Coughlin's revival of the discredited Protocols.

Another newspaper had one day given a prominent front page display to Streicher's new anti-Semitic school primer. It did not, however, make any mention whatever of the story, which had been released to the press on the same day, of President Roosevelt's meeting with several gentlemen in preliminary conversations which subsequently culminated in the Evian Conference. Our committee met with the editor, who admitted that exceedingly bad judgment had been used in the selection of and the position assigned to news and assured us of greater care in the future. The principal value in these contacts has been to make the newspapers aware that lapses are noted and challenged, and, as a conesquence, less occasion for complaint is provided.

Our Public Relations Committee has furnished the Superintendent of Schools with a list of all Jewish holidays and he has promised to communicate the infor-

mation to all department heads with instructions to avoid examinations on such days or to insure that no penalty attaches to a pupil who remains out of school because of holiday observance. We have also taken up the matter of scheduling civil service examinations both by the State of Michigan and City of Detroit on Saturdays. In both cases, the request to avoid such schedules was graciously accepted and the directors of both commissions are waiting upon constructive suggestions on our part to avoid the present difficulties which make Saturday examinations seem necessary. Other miscellaneous matters have engaged the attention of our Public Relations Committee. Plans for the coming year contemplate the distribution among non-Jews of pamphlets and brochures designed to promote a better understanding of the Jew and his position, particularly among those who, like teachers, ministers and journalists, are in a position to influence, mold and direct public opinion.

In connection with the work of both the Discrimination and Public Relations Committees, we have sought to maintain close contact with similar committees in other cities, to whom we refer situations having aspects of special local concern to them, and with the four national agencies operating in the field of defense activities.

As a result of our experiences in these two fields of discrimination and public relations, we have come to the inevitable conclusion that it is a delicate, involved business, with many perplexing and embarrassing situations, challenging the best intellectual resources at our command and making it incumbent upon us that we approach the problem as collaborators instead of competitors.

It was with this in mind that the Executive Committee of our Council on May 24, 1938 adopted a resolution directed to the American Jewish Congress, the American Jewish Committee, the B'nai Brith, and the Jewish Labor Committee, urging upon each of them "to find some formula for cooperative action in defense of Jewish rights." This resolution, which was unanimously ratified at a plenary session of the Council on June 2nd, was a wholly independent action and entirely without any previous knowledge of the invitation extended by Mr. Edgar Kaufmann on behalf of the Pittsburgh community and having an identical objective. Our resolution was not only forwarded to each of the four national bodies with an appropriate covering letter, but the texts of both the resolution and the letter were communicated to every other known community council, urging each to take similar action. Although our resolution was practically simultaneous with that of Pittsburgh, the many replies which we have received approving the steps taken by us and commending our initiative are ample proof that our thinking was correct. The Pittsburgh resolution of June 13th was itself a notable achievement. The formation on August 15th of a "General Council for Jewish Rights" to coordinate the activities of the American Jewish Congress, the American Jewish Committee, the B'nai B'rith and the Jewish Labor Committee "that bear specifically on the safeguarding of the equal rights of Jews," is a consummation for which all of us have devoutly wished. It could not have been achieved, however, without the exercise of community pressure such as was brought to bear by our Council and others who had been similarly stimulated. This particular event is irrefutable proof of the capacity of local community councils to influence and direct the thinking and planning of the many national bodies in varied fields of endeavor who pretend to act for the Jewish community of America but who, in fact, have never or seldom troubled themselves to find out what the masses are thinking of their plans, programs and activities.

VI

One of the early activities which our Council projected was the establishment of an Arbitration and Conciliation Court.

There was general agreement as to the desirability of such a tribunal, but a direct clash occurred when the question arose as to the Court's jurisdiction. It was intended that such a court should accept jurisdiction in all matters involving a specific Jewish interest. The socialist and labor group representatives, however, were fearful that the Council would inject itself into labor disputes and strongly urged that all issues involving capital and labor should be excluded from the Court's jurisdiction. This difference of opinion, upon which feeling ran high, presented the first real challenge to what had been an unbroken united front on all questions raised up to that point. Upon the resolution of this particular issue much depended for future cooperation. Every one being anxious to avoid a break and to achieve an unanimous result, a sub-committee offered a compromise formula which, while not wholly acceptable, was adopted without a single negative vote. Because a happy solution was found for a perplexing situation, the pertinent sections of the rules adopted by our Arbitration Court should be placed on record before you:

PART I — OF THE COMMITTEE

Section 1. Any person or group of persons desiring to arbitrate or arrange for the conciliation of any dispute or controversy may submit a request for such arbitration or conciliation to the Arbitration Committee of the Jewish Community Council of Detroit, hereinafter called the "Committee."

Section 2. If all parties to the dispute join or concur in such request and if the "Committee" decides to take cognizance thereof, the Arbitrators shall be chosen as provided in Part II hereof.

Section 3. If less than all the parties to a dispute join or concur in such request, the "Committee" may take such steps to procure the consent or concurrence of the remaining party or parties as the "Committee" may deem advisable; *provided, however, that in any matter or dispute involving the relationship of employer and employee, the "Committee" shall take no cognizance thereof whatsoever unless all of the parties thereto shall jointly agree to submit such request.*

Section 4. The "Committee" on its own motion may take cognizance of any matter or dispute which in its judgment affects the public interest and may thereupon request the parties involved to submit such matter or dispute for arbitration or conciliation; *subject, however, to the proviso contained in Section 3 hereof.*

Our Arbitration Court achieved immediate popularity. Such popularity derives not alone from the fact that disputants are desirous of avoiding the costs and delays attendant upon litigation in the regular courts, but also because this type of tribunal follows an accustomed pattern in the traditional self-governing Jewish community. The arbitrators on our panel constitute in a very real sense the spiritual legatees of the *dayyanim,* who, with the assistance of the rabbis, performed all the judicial functions in the *kahal.*

In less than six months, some thirty-five cases have been submitted to our Court, of which twenty-five have already been heard and satisfactorily settled. These cases exhibit a wide variety of disputes, two of them involving conflicting interests of synagogues with respect to cemeteries. Others involve the refusal of prosperous children to support their needy parents, grievances of teachers against their respective schools, disagreements between business partners and between husbands and wives, and many other cases running the whole gamut of human conflict.

VII

Shortly after the Council was organized, suggestions came from several quarters that the Council should undertake to sponsor under its own auspices some city-wide cultural program, either a lecture forum or another activity designed to promote an appreciative interest in the Jewish arts. The suggestion also came from the Yiddish groups that the Council undertake to coordinate the cultural activities of the multitude of Yiddish-speaking societies and *Landsmanschaften.* Accordingly, a Program Committee was appointed to explore the possibilities in both fields.

In response to the first suggestion, a plan to present a concert with the participation of several local orchestral and choral groups was formulated but it was

too late in the Spring to stage the event and it was postponed to the Fall. On the second suggestion, greater enthusiasm developed which has already resulted in a concrete plan. In response to the call to a conference, some 75 Yiddish-speaking organizations sent representatives who admitted the existence of great chaos, duplication, waste and lost effort in their cultural activities. The conference adopted a complete program for the coordination and integration of Yiddish cultural activities including the establishment of a local lecture bureau, the promotion of symposia, encouragement of the Yiddish stage and motion pictures, sponsorship of non-local lecturers, the stimulation of educational activities among the organizations, etc. This Conference specifically requested that its Executive Committee should be designated as the Yiddish Cultural Committee of the Jewish Community Council, and expressed a readiness to submit its entire program to the supervision of the Council's Program Committee.

This raised a nice question of the Council's function in the premises. It was argued that the Council would become sponsor for a specific type of educational activity, and objection was raised not only by the Hebraists, but also by those who, on principle, preferred that the Council should serve only as an advisory body and not as a functional organization. After prolonged discussion and clarification of positions, the proposal was adopted without a dissenting vote. It was revealed that the Council's only interest would be in the extension of its prestige and cohesive influence to the 75 organizations, all of whom are constituent members of the Council, and who in the absence of such unifying influence had been unsuccessful in many previous attempts at coordination. The Council was expected only to lend its continuing good offices to the coordinated effort and was offered complete supervision to insure that the activities undertaken would not commit those other elements in the Council who had no desire to become partners in promoting Yiddishist culture.

The general proposition has arisen on a number of occasions that the Council should provide merely a forum for discussion, to channel grievances for which there are no other outlets, to act both as a 'safety valve' for the release of emotions and as a 'ventilator' to air one's notions, but that it should never become a functional body. The argument is advanced that when a course of action is determined upon, it should be referred to some independent agency to execute under the Council's supervision. The point at issue has never required a specific determination of the principles involved. Rather, the Council has adopted a pragmatic approach. It has, where the circumstances warranted it, set up functional committees, e. g., Committees on Discrimination, Public Relations and Arbitration. In other situations, as for instance, when the Council's attention was focused on a particular delinquency area in a Jewish neighborhood, the matter was referred to the Jewish Centers, an agency charged with responsibility for the community's recreational and character-building program.

Other matters have at appropriate times engaged the attention of our Council. We have inaugurated steps seeking to establish a Detroit Round Table of the National Conference of Jews and Christians. We have approved the study of the occupational distribution among Detroit Jews being currently conducted on a fellowship at the University of Michigan under the auspices of the Conference of Jewish Relations and have urged our organizations to cooperate in the furtherance of this project. We have set up a committee to cooperate with Federation in the conduct of the 1938 Allied Jewish Campaign, to the end that an even wider mass participation be marshalled behind the community's major fund-raising event. We have established a community calendar through which organizations may clear dates for their events and

avoid, where possible, over-lapping of scheduled programs.

We have adopted resolutions condemning violations of the anti-Nazi boycott by Jewish merchants, and placing the community on record as opposed to the so-called Jewish People's Committee, whose independent program for unrestricted immigration into the United States and refugee aid is considered as wholly ill-advised and contributing only confusion to an issue requiring the maximum of tact and cooperative effort. We have recently appointed a Committee on Miscellaneous Solicitations to make a study of the vexing problems created by the multitude of appeals for Yeshivot and other institutions in Eastern Europe and Palestine and to make appropriate recommendations thereon.

The Detroit Jewish Community Council, which came into being on September 29, 1937, is today* only eleven months old, hardly ample time within which to have established any record about which to boast. We have explored the possibility of action in several areas and have entered cautiously upon the execution of tentative programs. Without achieving many concrete and tangible results, we have nevertheless had a year's experience in the realm of cooperative relationships. The various elements in the community have had the opportunity, not heretofore available to them, to learn to know each other more intimately, to appreciate each other's sincerity of purpose and to tolerate and accept points of view with which each does not necessarily agree—not with a condescending tolerance accorded by superiors to their inferiors, but with that deferential regard which obtains among equals. Already in our brief experience we have established mutual respect for honest, though differing, opinions and have been taught to appraise more intelligently the capacity and resources for leadership latent in groups heretofore denied a share in the administration of community affairs.

The Council cannot be accorded the entire credit for having unified the Detroit Jewish community, for it must be borne in mind that no community council, nor, for that matter, any other form of organization, however perfect, can unify a social group which does not *a priori* feel a sense of unity and a need for collective action on problems of common concern. We have merely captured this sense of and feeling for unity and have organized it for a joint constructive and cooperative enterprise.

We have set our compass and pointed the direction in which we should like to travel. The years ahead of us will record the measure by which the reality of our achievement shall have approximated the vision of our ideal.

* This paper was read before The Reconstructionist Summer Institute on September 4, 1938.

The Future of Reconstructionism

(Conclusion of the Proceedings of the Reconstructionist Summer Institute)

AFTER Rabbi Eisenstein's report on the progress of Reconstructionism from its inception to the present moment, Rabbi Milton Steinberg led a discussion on its future. He called attention to the conclusion to which the Editorial Board of THE RECONSTRUCTIONIST had come, that the mere publication of a bi-weekly periodical was not sufficient to give effect to the Reconstructionist philosophy of Jewish life. The need for a wider range of activity was indicated to accomplish this aim. The progress that had been made in the past succeeded in creating a demand, which must now be satisfied for text-books, syllabi, tracts, devotional literature and other publications to give concrete guidance to Jewish life in accordance with the Reconstructionist Program. As a result of the interest ere-

ated by THE RECONSTRUCTIONIST, study groups have been organized in various parts of the country but find themselves handicapped by a lack of appropriate material in a form easily available for the layman. Among the specific areas in which there was need for new Reconstructionist literature were the preparation of a book of supplementary prayers for use in the synagogue, a book of prayers for home devotion, a new *haggadah,* literature evaluating Jewish religious observance out of which might grow a normative code of Jewish ritual practice, popular pamphlets and tracts explaining the principles of Reconstructionism in simple terms, and syllabi and courses for Reconstructionist study groups.

The expansion of Reconstructionist activities to include the preparation and distribution of this literature could not be accomplished without giving some thought to the problem of ways and means. No attempt had been made, or was contemplated, to change the character of Reconstructionism from a school of thought that might serve as a leaven for Jewish life in America, to an organized movement, which would necessarily have to compete with other organized movements in Jewish life. It was desirable that the organizational machinery for carrying on Reconstructionist work be kept at a minimum in order not to divert energy from more creative tasks to the exigencies of maintaining the organization. At the same time, some minimum of organizational machinery was necessary to insure the personnel and the means to produce the needed literature and to spread Reconstructionism by word of mouth. One of the main purposes of calling together the Summer Institute was to consult with those who have come within the orbit of THE RECONSTRUCTIONIST'S influence on these practical problems that confront Reconstructionism if it is to continue to develop.

Rabbi Steinberg therefore called on those present to express their views on the following questions:

1. How can our periodical, THE RECONSTRUCTIONIST, be improved?

2. What projects should Reconstructionism engage in during the coming year in addition to publishing THE RECONSTRUCTIONIST?

3. How can the Editorial Board of THE RECONSTRUCTIONIST be helpful to local groups in carrying on Reconstructionist activities in their respective communities?

4. How shall Reconstructionism be organized and financed in order to make possible the wider scope of activities projected?

Discussion on THE RECONSTRUCTIONIST, while it revealed, in the main, satisfaction with the paper as it had been appearing, offered a number of suggestions from those present. One criticism advanced was that not all the articles which had appeared were relevant to the Reconstructionist point of view. Another was that the articles were not adapted to the reading of the average layman but rather seemed designed for people professionally interested in solving intellectual problems confronting Jewry. A third critique was to the effect that too little space was given to belles lettres and comment on the arts.

Replying to these observations, Rabbi Steinberg expressed the opinion that it would be a mistake to lower the intellectual level of THE RECONSTRUCTIONIST in order to interest a wider public. The subscription list of THE RECONSTRUCTIONIST includes mainly rabbis, Jewish educators, Jewish social workers, and lay leaders who occupy key positions of influence in Jewish life. Their intellectual level being above the average, it would be a mistake to fail to interest them in order to appeal to the general public. Popular education in Reconstructionism was important but could be accomplished, without lowering the intellectual standard of the paper itself, by the publication of tracts written in simple language. He denied that the editors had published articles which were irrelevant to Reconstructionism and showed, in the case of

a particular article referred to, that it had important bearing on the reconstruction of our religious life. As to the desirability of allotting more space to review of the arts and to belles lettres, he thought the point well taken, but called attention to the difficulty of securing that kind of literary material, since writers in these fields lived by their writing and, very properly, expected to be paid for their contributions, which the financial condition of THE RECONSTRUCTIONIST did not permit.

Discussion on what projects Reconstructionism should undertake in the near future and what could be done to encourage the work of Reconstructionist groups and study circles dealt mainly with the question of whether popular pamphlets on Reconstructionism were the primary need or whether the preparation of books for study and for the use of the synagogue should be given priority. Those who held the former view called attention to the need of creating a demand for Reconstructionist literature by popularizing the Reconstructionist program, so that any books subsequently published would find a market. Those who took the latter view held that it was dangerous to create a demand and then to find oneself without means to satisfy it. The final conclusion called attention to the possibility of pursuing both objectives simultaneously but stressed the need of preparing and issuing the pamphlets without waiting for the completion of the rest of the publication program, which would naturally require more time. There was also some discussion as to the advisability of publishing anything like a code of Jewish religious observance. Though literature seeking to evaluate traditional religious practices should be encouraged, the formulation of definite norms of behavior was held to be premature.

On the subject of organization the following suggestions were advanced:

1. That an effort be made to employ the services of a competent person to give his entire time to furthering the literary projects suggested in the discussion.

2. That efforts be made to raise a fund for a Reconstructionist Fellowship to serve this purpose.*

3. That an effort be made to organize, in the various communities of the country, groups of Friends of THE RECONSTRUCTIONIST who would solicit contributions to this fund and subscriptions to THE RECONSTRUCTIONIST, and who would organize whatever local activities may be helpful in giving effect to the Reconstructionist program of Jewish life.

4. The organization of an administrative committee of laymen, representing, to begin with, congregations whose rabbis are on the Editorial Board of THE RECONSTRUCTIONIST, to collaborate with the Editorial Board by administering the financial affairs of the movement.

Great enthusiasm was shown for this program and many of those present made individual pledges of what they personally intended to do toward carrying it out.

* Happily, this suggestion was acted upon without delay, and a Reconstructionist Fellowship was obtained from a generous donor who insists upon anonymity. The Fellowship was awarded for the season 1938-1939 to Rabbi Eugene Kohn.

CORRESPONDENCE

ON ISRAEL AS THE SUFFERING SERVANT

Sirs:

I have just finished reading A. J. Burnstein's "Dilemma of the Lonely Intellectual"; it was provocative and I enjoyed it, but a question occurs to me. . . .

On page 11 he says: "For if people do not seek to understand their suffering that very suffering becomes inhuman. . . ."

In the use of the word "understand" there is, it seems to me, a mildly colossal assumption of divinity. What does he mean "understand"?

If he means that a *reasonable* understanding of the present day Jewish tragedy is to be found somewhere among "the intellectual and spiritual riches of 30 centuries of Jewish thought" he indulges himself in a palpable absurdity; if he means that thirty centuries

of Jewish thought will, sometime in the near future, lead us to that reasonable understanding—again a palpable absurdity. Metaphysicians come and metaphysicians go, but the quantity of unconquered doubt remains overwhelming.

It seems reasonable then to infer that Rabbi Burnstein merely means that Judaism will cloak its suffering disciples in dignity. But, if this is his meaning, there is in it no small tincture of the pychopathological: Judaism (if I understand Rabbi Burnstein aright) is offered to us as an asylum from the inhospitableness of reality. There the Jew will be told that persecution is not merely persecution, concentration camps not merely concentration camps. "Behind the bludgeon of the storm trooper," I hear some rabbi saying, "is a benign, cosmic purpose." Thereupon, instead of calling his congregants "suffering," he wedges his tongue in his cheek and euphemistically dubs them "Suffering Servants."

What difference is there, tell me, between the Jew who permits himself this delusion and the man who, cudgeled and bruised by reality, finds ease and sanctuary in the belief that he is Napoleon?

The effect of this delusion is, of course, sterility. Why should the man who experiences all the grandiose pleasures of a Napoleon, or analogically, the Jew who experiences all the grandiose pleasures of being something as high-sounding as "The Suffering Servant," forsake those pleasures and reconfront the torture of reality?

It is possible, I think, to have faith without fantasy; do you not think it would be more intelligent to devote the whole energy of the Jewish people to the fight against inhumanity, rather than (as Burnstein would have it) to the cultivation of a sterile delusion?

AVERY COHAN,
New York, N. Y.

THE RECONSTRUCTIONIST'S FOREIGN POLICY

Sirs:

For the past three years I have followed with interest the program laid down by THE RECONSTRUCTIONIST for the advancement of Judaism. But it seems to me that when the magazine attempts to enter into the broader sphere of international relations, the program it there lays down serves neither demoracy nor Judaism.

Were I not a Jew I should oppose a program of isolation and neutrality for America. Since I am a Jew, the program of collective action is the only one to follow. The Jewish stake in democracy is perhaps greater than that of other people. The Jew can survive only in an atmosphere of democracy where he lives as an equal with his fellows, where he worships as he pleases, and where his rights as a human being are unchallenged. The essences of Judaism and democracy are identical, and cannot be separated. Judaism stands for social justice and freedom, and cannot tolerate dictation and violence.

Democracy today stands at bay. The number of victims, prey to aggression, mounts each month. The United States plays a direct part in every crisis, and under the unneutral Neutrality Act, is aiding the aggressor states. Of all people the Jews, who have known oppression, have the greatest interest in the preservation of democratic institutions the world over. They do not hesitate to call on the State Department to aid their brethren, to open the gates of immigration, and to prevent the ruin of Palestine. Their welfare at home is bound up with the welfare of Jews and liberals abroad. How then, can they as a people, find salvation in isolation?

Despite the Monroe Doctrine and a traditional policy of aloofness, this country has participated in the two major wars of the past 150 years. The United States proposed the League of Nations, the Nine Power Pact, the Kellogg-Briand Pact, and erected Czechoslovakia, to list only a few of our interventions in foreign politics. We bear a share in the affairs of the world too great to be thrown off, and as McReynolds of the House Foreign Affairs Committee said, "No legislation can keep us out of war." The spirit of this nation must always be on the side of democracies, wherever they be.

Today, faced by aggression from all sides, the democratic nations, and therefore the Jews, face disaster unless they cooperate with democratic forces. It is not enough to fight the menace at home; it must be checked abroad at the same time. The duty of the Jews of this land today is to support the movement for a change in the neutrality act so as to distinguish between victim and aggressor nations, to back the drive to lift the embargo against Loyalist Spain, to aid China and restrain the sending of war materials to Japan, to get behind the reciprocal trade program of Sceretary Cordell Hull, to block all trade agreements with aggressor nations, and to prepare to cooperate for peaceful change and international justice. Jews of this country cannot take refuge behind an imaginary wall of isolation. Time is fleeting, and with each passing minute goes a chance to halt aggression and strengthen democracy.

Sincerely yours,
ALAN D. KANDEL
New York, N. Y.

(Mr. Kandel, we fear, misrepresents somewhat the position of THE RECONSTRUCTIONIST. We refer him to an editorial in our issue of October 21, 1938, in which we advocate a change in the United States neutrality legislation in these words: "For that reason we urge that a workable neutrality policy be set now, one which shall, without embroiling us in war, still enable us to be of help to those powers which represent values akin to our own. We must decide now the extent to which we can give of our financial and material resources and still keep the peace." This can hardly be construed as isolationism.—Eds.)